

Message Text

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ORIGIN PRS-01

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FOR HODDING CARTER FROM S/PRS - TRATTNER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS)

SUBJECT: DAILY BRIEFING, JUNE 14, 1977
NO. 1

1. TOTH CASE AND U. S. PRISONERS RELEASED BY CUBA WERE
MAJOR TOPICS.

2. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ON TOTH, I SAID, FIRST, THAT
ON AFTERNOON OF JUNE 13 WE PROTESTED TO SOVIET EMBASSY IN
WASHINGTON HIS WEEKEND DETENTION, AND THAT WE PROTESTED IN
MOSCOW MORNING OF JUNE 14. AT THAT TIME, SOVIETS CHARGED,
AS REPORTED IN PRESS, THAT TOTH HAD ENGAGED IN COLLECTION
OF SECRET INFORMATION. I SAID THAT, BASED ON OUR KNOWLEDGE
OF FACTS OF THIS CASE, WE SEE NOTHING IN TOTH'S ACTIVITIES
THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED INCOMPATIBLE WITH HIS LEGITIMATE
JOURNALISTIC STATUS AND ACTIVITIES. AS WE SAID YESTERDAY,
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WE DEPLORE THIS ACTION BY SOVIET AUTHORITIES. WE REGARD
IT AS UNWARRANTED INTERFERENCE IN LEGITIMATE WORK OF A
JOURNALIST AND INCONSISTENT WITH OBJECTIVES OF HELSINKI
FINAL ACT. WE VIEW THE MATTER WITH GREAT CONCERN AND WE
ARE WATCHING DEVELOPMENT OF THIS MATTER VERY CLOSELY. I
DECLINED TO SPECULATE ABOUT SOVIET MOTIVATIONS OR WHAT LIES
BEHIND THE CASE. ASKED IF THIS HARASSMENT HAS BECOME A

PATTERNI REPEATED YOUR JUNE 13 COMMENT THAT THERE SEEMS TO BE A GENERAL PATTERN OF HARASSMENT DESIGNED TO DISCREDIT

AMERICAN JOURNALISTS WORKING IN SOVIET UNION AND INHIBIT THEIR CONTACTS WITH SOVIET CITIZENS; I LATER LISTED SUCH OTHER EXAMPLES OF THIS AS EXPULSION OF AP'S KRIMSKY, AND SOVIET PRESS CHARGES AGAINST OSNOS OF POST, WREN AND RICK SMITH OF NYTIMES, WALLACE OF U. S. NEWS, AND FRIENDLY OF NEWSWEEK. TO QUESTION WHETHER RETALIATORY ACTION BEING CONSIDERED AGAINST ANY SOVIET CORRESPONDENTS HERE, I REPEATED EARLIER STATEMENT THAT WE WATCHING CASE CLOSELY AND SAID OUR FURTHER ACTIONS WILL BE RELATED TO DEVELOPMENTS IN CASE. I TOOK A QUESTION WHETHER DEPARTMENT ADVISED PRESIDENT AGAINST SEEING MRS. SHCHARANSKY. POSTED ANSWER (FROM SHULMAN) SAID THAT, AS FAR AS WE KNOW, NO REQUEST FOR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT WAS RECEIVED AND SO WE WERE NOT CALLED ON TO ADVISE HIM ON IT.

3. I WAS ASKED TO IDENTIFY U. S. PRISONERS RELEASED BY CUBA (SOME OF WHOM HAVE RETURNED TO U. S. AND BEEN FILMED AND INTERVIEWED ON THEIR ARRIVAL). I RECALLED OUR POSTED ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION LAST WEEK, WHICH STATED BELIEF THAT, DESPITE OUR VIEW THAT PRIVACY ACT DOES REPEAT DOES PERMIT US IN THESE CASES TO REVEAL THEIR NAMES, WE DECIDED NOT TO DISCLOSE THEM OR ANY DETAILS. EVEN THOUGH, LATER, WE DID IN A GENERAL WAY DISCUSS SOME OF THE CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST THEM IN CUBA, WE WERE NOT SPECIFIC AND DID NOT DISCLOSE NAMES. REASON FOR THIS POSITION, QUITE APART FROM PRIVACY ACT, IS THAT WE DO NOT FEEL IT APPROPRIATE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DRAW PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THOSE RETURNING. AS FAR AS PRESS CONTACT WITH THEM OR PUBLIC IDENTIFICATION OF THEM IS CONCERNED, WE THINK THESE ARE PERSONAL DECISIONS FOR THEM, NOT US, TO MAKE. I DENIED THAT ANY OF THEM WERE INSTRUCTED NOT TO SEE THE PRESS, AND REJECTED SUGGESTION IT WAS IN OUR INTEREST TO KEEP THEM FROM DESCRIBING CUBAN JAIL CONDITIONS AT A TIME WHEN WE AND CUBANS ARE ESTABLISHING WIDER CONTACT. THE RETURNEES ARE FREE TO SAY WHATEVER THEY WISH TO SAY TO WHOMEVER THEY WISH TO SAY IT.

4. AFTER BRIEFING, ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM CHRISTOPHER, I ANNOUNCED TO PRESS THAT DEPUTY SECRETARY HAD TELEPHONED DOBRYNIN TUESDAY AFTERNOON (JUNE 14) TO EXPRESS SERIOUS CONCERN OF USG IN TOTH MATTER.

5. YOU SHOULD ALSO KNOW THAT STATE DEPARTMENT CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION HAS CABLED BREZHNEV PROTESTING TREATMENT OF TOTH AND URGING HIM TO INTERCEDE PERSONALLY.

6. RICK SMITH OF NYTIMES CALLED REQUESTING TO SPEAK WITH YOU ABOUT TOTH MATTER. HE RAISED CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET TREATMENT OF TOTH WHICH NYTIMES REGARDS AS "UNWARRANTED INTERFERENCE IN TOTH'S PRACTICE OF INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED JOURNALISTIC FUNCTIONS". NYTIMES URGES DEPARTMENT TO "DO ALL IT CAN TO PRESS SOVIET GOVERNMENT TO INSURE THAT TOTH CAN EXERCISE THE FREEDOM TO PROCEED WITH HIS NORMAL FUNCTIONS AND HIS DEPARTURE AS HE WISHES." SMITH SAYS THESE THOUGHTS WILL BE MENTIONED IN MESSAGE TO TIMES MOSCOW BUREAU WITH EXPECTATION THAT SOVIETS WILL REACT.

7. TOTH STORY LED CBS AND NBC EVENING TELEVISION SHOWS, WITH NBC MENTIONING DEPUTY SECRETARY'S CALL TO DOBRYNIN.

CHRISTOPHER

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